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IV.—*On the Country around Port Philip, South Australia.* By J. H. Wedge, Esq. Communicated from the Colonial Office.

MR. Wedge landed at Port Philip on the 7th August, 1835, at the encampment of the party left for the purpose of maintaining the friendly intercourse with the aborigines of that part of Australia. He found several families of natives residing with the white men left by Mr. Batman, together with Buckley, the Englishman who had joined the former party, after having passed thirty-three years of his life with the natives. Of this man's curious narrative we subjoin the following brief particulars:—

Buckley was born in Cheshire, and having entered the army, was, after two or three years' service, transported for life, having, with six others, turned out to shoot the Duke of Kent at Gibraltar. He arrived at Port Philip in 1802, with a detachment of prisoners destined to form an establishment at that place. He was employed as a stone-mason (his former trade) in erecting a building for the reception of Government stores. A short time previous to the abandonment of the settlement by Colonel Collins, he absconded with two other men, named Marmon and Pye: the latter left his companions before they reached the river at the northern extremity of the Port, being exhausted with want of food and other privations. Marmon remained with Buckley till they had wandered nearly round the Port, but left him somewhere on Indented Head, with the intention of returning to the establishment; but neither he nor Pye were ever heard of afterwards. Buckley thus alone, continued his wanderings along the beach, and completed the circuit of the Port. He afterwards proceeded a considerable distance along the coast, towards Cape Otway; he, however, at last became weary of such a lonely and precarious existence, and determined on returning. Soon after he had reached, on his way back, the neighbourhood of Indented Head, he fell in with the family of natives with which he continued to live till the 12th July, 1835, the day on which he joined the party left by Mr. Batman.

His memory fails him as to dates, but he supposes his falling in with the natives to have occurred about twelve months after his leaving the establishment. The natives received him with great kindness: he soon attached himself to the chief, named Nullaboins, and accompanied him in all his wanderings. From the time of his being abandoned by his companions, till his final return to the establishment, a period of thirty-three years, he had not seen a white man. For the first few years, his mind and time were fully occupied in guarding against the treachery of strange Indians, and in procuring food; he however soon acquired a perfect knowledge of the language, adopted the native habits, and became quite as one of the community. The natives gave him a wife, but dis-

covering that she had a preference for another, he relinquished her ; though the woman and her paramour forfeited their lives, having violated the custom which prevails amongst them : for, when a woman is promised as a wife, which generally happens as soon as she is born, it is considered a most binding engagement, the forfeiture of which is visited with most summary vengeance. Buckley has had no children, either legitimate or illegitimate : during the whole time of his residence, his adventures have been devoid of any remarkable interest, having passed nearly the whole of the time in the vicinity of Indented Head, excepting only on one occasion, when he travelled about 150 miles to the westward of Port Philip.

He describes the natives as cannibals, rude and barbarous in their customs, but well disposed towards the white men. He was unable to introduce amongst them any essential improvements, feeling that his safety chiefly depended on his conforming exactly to all their habits and customs. Although he was always anxious to return to civilized life, he had for many years abandoned all hope of so doing. The following circumstance, however, eventually restored him to his countrymen :—Two natives residing at the establishment left by Mr. Batman had stolen an axe, and having, by others, been assured that the theft would be severely punished, they absconded, and accidentally fell in with Buckley, communicated to him the fact of white men being in the neighbourhood, and their reason for running away ; also saying that they would procure other natives, and return and spear the white men. Buckley succeeded in dissuading them from this outrage, and proceeded in search of Mr. Batman's party, and in two days succeeded in joining them. The Europeans were living in a miserable hut, with several native families encamped around them. On being observed, Buckley caused great surprise, and, indeed, some alarm ; his gigantic stature, his height being six feet six inches, enveloped in a kangaroo skin rug, his long beard, and hair of thirty-three years' growth, together with his spears, shield and clubs, it may readily be supposed presented a most extraordinary appearance. The Europeans believed him to be some great chief, and were in no little trepidation as to his intentions being friendly or not. Buckley proceeded at once to the encampments, and seated himself amongst the natives, taking no notice of the white men, who, however, quickly detected, to their great astonishment, the features of a European : and after considerable difficulty, succeeded in learning who he was. He could not in the least express himself in English ; but after the lapse of ten or twelve days, he was enabled to speak with tolerable fluency, though he frequently inadvertently used the language of the natives. The family with which Buckley so long resided were greatly attached to him, and bitterly lamented his leaving them. He resides at

present at the settlement formed by the gentlemen who have associated to form a new colony, through the means of the friendly intercourse which has been here established. He expresses his intention of remaining for the present, for the purpose of being the medium of communication with the natives. On his receiving the conditional pardon which His Excellency the Governor most humanely and promptly forwarded to him, on his case being made known, and hearing of the meritorious assistance he had afforded the settlers, he was most deeply affected ; and nothing could exceed the joy he evinced at once more feeling himself a free man, received again within the pale of civilized society.

The natives, as before stated, are cannibals, but they do not indulge in this horrible propensity except in times of war, when the bodies of those who are killed are roasted and eaten. They make no secret of this barbarous custom, but speak of it as a matter of course ; and coolly describe their manner of preparing the repast, the process of which is too revolting to commit to paper. They have another custom, exceeding, if possible, the above in cruelty ; namely, that of destroying their new-born children, if born before the former child has reached the age of three or four years, until which time they are not weaned ; and it is to avoid the difficulty of providing sustenance at once for two children, that this revolting practice is pursued, necessarily greatly thinning the population. Polygamy is common amongst them ; few of the men having less than two wives, and some of them four or more. The women, as usual with most uncivilized people, are completely subservient to the men, acting merely as their servants, receiving little in return but austerity and violence. In the regulations which prevail respecting their wives, they have one which seems to have some connexion with, or resemblance to, the Mosaic law : on the death of a husband, his wives, whatever be their number, become the property of the eldest of the brothers, or his next of kin. They have a very curious custom of prohibiting the man from looking at the mother of the girl given to him in marriage : this is adhered to with the utmost strictness, and the greatest concern is evinced if, by any accident, the mother is seen. They are astonishingly dexterous in the use of the weapons employed in defence of their persons ; and in tracking each other, the kangaroo, or other animals : their senses of seeing, hearing, and smelling are surprisingly acute.

These people seem to have no idea of a Supreme Being, although it is somewhat difficult to reconcile this with the fact of their believing in a future state ; for they certainly entertain the idea that, after death, they will again exist in the forms of white men. This is obviously a new idea, since they have become acquainted with us, and leads us to hope that the friendly intercourse we have established

may tend to the expansion of their intellect, and, consequently, the amelioration of their condition. Their habitations are of the most rude and simple construction, being made of the branches of trees, arranged with tolerable compactness, at an angle of about  $45^{\circ}$ ; in shape they form a segment of a circle; and their size is in proportion to the number of inmates of which the family is composed.

In traversing the interior of the country, my attention was directed to that part of it from the northern extremity of the Port, round to the westward, including Indented Head, and embracing about forty miles inland.

The peninsula of Indented Head is about 100,000 acres in extent. It is bounded on the west by the Barwurn, a river discovered by myself, which empties itself into Bass's Straits, a few miles to the westward of Indented Head, and in its course passes within about three miles of the western extremity of Port Philip. The eastern part of this peninsula, for about four or five miles from the margin of the Port, is a low and flat surface, the soil being light and sandy, and well covered with grass, thinly wooded with the honeysuckle, the oak, mimosa, and eucalyptus. The land then swells into low tiers, and alternates with beautiful hill and dale. On these hills the soil is of finer quality, and the grass more luxuriant, than on the plains. They gradually decline to the westward in gentle undulations, and terminate at the Barwurn, in some places in steep banks, varying in height from thirty to sixty feet. It is a great drawback to the availability of the peninsula, that the river Barwurn is subject to the tides, and is consequently salt up to where it is joined by another river, about three miles from the western extremity of the Port; otherwise it would be one of the finest situations for sheep-farming I have ever met with. On the peninsula there are many small water-holes, which afford the natives a supply of water; but it is brackish, and of bad quality, although I experienced no ill effects from the use of it. At the junction of the rivers above alluded to, the one coming from the north-west is called the Yaloak by the natives; the other, coming from the westward, I have named the Byron, into which, about ten or twelve miles up, another stream falls, which I have named the Leigh. These rivers pass through very extensive open plains, much farther than the eye can reach, and, from Buckley's information, at least 150 miles to the westward. About fifteen miles, in a south-west direction, from the junction of the Byron with the Yaloak, is a lake, called by the natives *Moderwarrie*; the intermediate country being grassy hills (called by the natives *Burrubull*) of moderate elevation, thinly covered with the she-oak trees; and around the lake, an undulating grassy country, thinly timbered, extends to the westward.

On approaching the coast to the southward, the country gradually becomes more thickly timbered, and the quality of the soil not so good. The coast hence trends nearly south-west to Cape Otway, the country being hilly, and thickly wooded ; and, from its appearance, I should not deem it fit for agricultural purposes, although it not unfrequently happens that very erroneous ideas are formed by judging of the nature of a country by distant observations.

Near the northern extremity of the Port, and about three or four miles from it, two rivers form a junction,—the one coming from the north, and the other from the eastward ; and their united waters are discharged into the Port together. Both these rivers are navigable for vessels of about sixty tons, for five or six miles above the junction. There is a bar at the mouth of these rivers, which precludes large vessels from entering ; but up to the bar vessels of the largest burthen can approach, and find secure anchorage. The country between these rivers, extending to the north forty or fifty miles, and to the east about twenty-five miles, to a tier of mountains, which range from the back of Western Port in a northerly direction, is undulating, and intersected with valleys, and is moderately wooded, especially to the east and north-east : to the north there are open plains. The soil is a sandy loam, and is generally of good quality, and in some of the valleys very rich : the surface is everywhere thickly covered with grass, intermixed with the rib-grass and other herbs. I think very highly of this part of the country, and consider it to be well adapted for agricultural pursuits. It will be desirable to form townships at the head of the salt water in each of these rivers. The river coming from the eastward is called by the natives Yarrow-Yarrow. The country between the river flowing from the northward and the western extremity of the Port, and from twenty-five to forty miles inland, is open, and partakes more of the nature of downs. The whole is thickly covered with a light growth of grass, the soil being in general stiff and shallow. About midway there is a river falling into the Port, which comes from the north-west. I do not know whether it is navigable any distance inland, as I crossed it in the first instance about twelve or fourteen miles above its entrance into the Port, and in the second a considerable deal higher up, at the foot of the range of hills which bound the plains on the north-west. About Station Mount (called by the natives Villamunata) the country is wooded, with this exception ; and here and there along the shore of the Port, and along the course of the river just mentioned, the plains are quite open, as much so as the heaths of Cambridgeshire ; and I have no doubt they will become valuable sheep stations for breeding flocks. It is probable they are affected by the droughts in the dry summers : but there is no country with-

out its disadvantages ; and I do not think it will be worse, nor, indeed, so bad, in that respect, as the east coast of New South Wales, as it is more exposed to the south and westerly winds, from which direction the rains come ; and, as far as my observations went, very heavy dews are prevalent.

The country to the north and north-west of these plains is broken and hilly ; and I am inclined to think, from its appearance, it is extensively adapted for pastoral purposes. There is a great deficiency of timber fit for building and fencing purposes, the want of which will be seriously felt in this part of the country, whenever it becomes thickly inhabited. On the whole, I think favourably of the country for the general purposes of colonization.

There are not many kangaroos in that portion of the country which I examined ; but those I did fall in with are the largest I have ever seen, and they are very swift of foot. There are wild native dogs, which appear to me to be a description of small wolf ; and I fear great watchfulness will be necessary to protect the sheep from their depredations.

In my rambles I met with several *emus*, with whose stateliness and grandeur I was much struck. There are also some large birds of the crane kind, and the wild goose, quails, black swans, wild ducks, and teal in abundance ; and they are all, with the exception of the quails, very wild, and difficult to get at.

V.—*Substance of a Letter received from J. Becroft, Esq., relative to his recent Ascent of the Quorra, dated Fernando Po, 28th February, 1836. Communicated from the Colonial Office.*

ALTHOUGH the Company at Liverpool which sent out the expedition to the Quorra in 1832 has been dissolved, some enterprising merchants of the same city have determined to make still further efforts to establish a trade with this part of the world. With this view the steam-boat Quorra, which had been lying at Fernando Po since the close of the former expedition, was during last year purchased and placed under the command of Mr. Becroft.

A party, consisting of Mr. Becroft and four other Europeans, with thirty Kroomen, departed from Fernando Po, on the 16th September, 1835, and after passing the village where the unfortunate Lander was attacked and wounded, they reached Eboe, after thirty-seven hours' steaming ; here the party was received with great cordiality by King Obie. Mr. Becroft determined the position of Eboe to be about lat. 5° 55' N., long. 6° 2' E.\* It is a

\* Captain Allen, R.N., who made the survey of the river, did not get an observation at this place.